

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

### **LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer obtained via polymerization of an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether represented by the general formula (II):

$$\text{CF}_2=\text{CF}-\text{O}-(\text{CFY}^2)_m-\text{A} \quad (\text{II})$$

(wherein Y<sup>2</sup> represents F, Cl, Br or I, m represents an integer of 1 to 5; when m is an integer of 2 to 5, m atoms of Y<sup>2</sup> are the same or different; and A represents -SO<sub>2</sub>X; X represents F, Cl, Br, I or -NR<sup>5</sup>R<sup>6</sup>; R<sup>5</sup> and R<sup>6</sup> are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group), and tetrafluoroethylene, wherein said stabilized fluoropolymer shows an intensity ratio [x/y] between main chain terminal carboxyl group-due peak [x] and -CF<sub>2</sub>- due peak [y] of not higher than 0.05 in IR measurement, said stabilized fluoropolymer has a melt index of 0.1 to 20 g/10 min as measured under the conditions of 270°C and a load of 2.16 kg according to JIS K 7210,

which method comprises ~~producing said stabilized fluoropolymer by~~ subjecting a treatment target substance containing a sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer to a fluorination treatment,

wherein said sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer is a fluoropolymer containing -SO<sub>3</sub>M (in which M represents H, NR<sup>1</sup>R<sup>2</sup>R<sup>3</sup>R<sup>4</sup> or M<sup>1</sup><sub>I/L</sub>; R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup>, R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> are the

same or different and each represents H or an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms; and  $M^1$  represents an L-valent metal), and

said treatment target substance has a moisture content of not higher than 500 ppm by mass.

2. (withdrawn-currently amended): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 1,

wherein the sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer further contains  $-\text{SO}_2\text{X}$  and/or  $-\text{COZ}$  (wherein X represents F, Cl, Br, I or  $-\text{NR}^5\text{R}^6$  and Z represents  $-\text{NR}^7\text{R}^8$  or  $-\text{OR}^9$ ;  $\text{R}^5$ ,  $\text{R}^6$ ,  $\text{R}^7$  and  $\text{R}^8$ ,  $\text{R}^5$  and  $\text{R}^6$  are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group and  $\text{R}^9$  represents an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms).

3. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 1,

wherein the sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer further contains  $-\text{COOH}$  at the polymer chain terminus or termini.

4. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 1,

wherein the fluorination treatment is carried out using a gaseous fluorinating agent comprising a fluorine source,

said fluorine source is at least one species selected from the group consisting of  $\text{F}_2$ ,  $\text{SF}_4$ ,  $\text{IF}_5$ ,  $\text{NF}_3$ ,  $\text{PF}_5$ ,  $\text{ClF}$  and  $\text{ClF}_3$  and

said fluorine source amounts to not less than 1% by volume of said gaseous fluorinating agent.

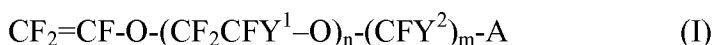
5. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 4,

wherein the fluorine source is F<sub>2</sub>.

6. (withdrawn-currently amended): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 1,

wherein the sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer is a copolymer which is at least binary comprising

an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether represented by the general formula (I):



(wherein Y<sup>1</sup> represents F, Cl, Br, I or a perfluoroalkyl group, n represents an integer of 0 to 3; n atoms/groups of Y<sup>1</sup> are the same or different; Y<sup>2</sup> represents F, Cl, Br or I; m represents an integer of 1 to 5; when m is an integer of 2 to 5, m atoms of Y<sup>2</sup> are the same or different; A represents ~~—SO<sub>2</sub>X or —COZ~~; X represents F, Cl, Br, I or ~~—NR<sup>5</sup>R<sup>6</sup> and Z represents —NR<sup>7</sup>R<sup>8</sup> or —OR<sup>9</sup>; R<sup>5</sup>, R<sup>6</sup>, R<sup>7</sup> and R<sup>8</sup>; R<sup>5</sup> and R<sup>6</sup> are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group and R<sup>9</sup> represents an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms~~) and

a copolymerizable monomer with said acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether, said copolymerizable monomer is an “other vinyl ether” other than said acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether and an ethylenic monomer,

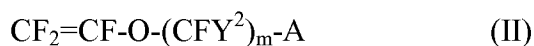
said copolymer comprises 5 to 40 mole percent of an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether unit derived from said acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether, 60 to

95 mole percent of an ethylenic monomer unit derived from said ethylenic monomer and 0 to 5 mole percent of an “other vinyl ether unit” derived from said “other vinyl ether”.

7. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 6, wherein n is 0 (zero).

8. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 6, wherein Y<sup>2</sup> is F and m is 2.

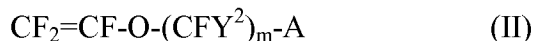
9. (currently amended): A stabilized fluoropolymer obtained via polymerization of an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether represented by the general formula (II):



(wherein Y<sup>2</sup> represents F, Cl, Br or I, m represents an integer of 1 to 5; when m is an integer of 2 to 5, m atoms of Y<sup>2</sup> are the same or different; and A represents -SO<sub>2</sub>X-~~or~~-COZ; X represents F, Cl, Br, I or -NR<sup>5</sup>R<sup>6</sup> and Z represents ~~NR<sup>7</sup>R<sup>8</sup> or OR<sup>9</sup>; R<sup>5</sup>, R<sup>6</sup>, R<sup>7</sup> and R<sup>8</sup>; R<sup>5</sup> and R<sup>6</sup> are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group and R<sup>9</sup> represents an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms~~), and tetrafluoroethylene,

wherein said stabilized fluoropolymer shows an intensity ratio [x/y] between main chain terminal carboxyl group-due peak [x] and -CF<sub>2</sub>- due peak [y] of not higher than 0.05 in IR measurement, said stabilized fluoropolymer has a melt index of 0.1 to 20 g/10 min as measured under the conditions of 270°C and a load of 2.16 kg according to JIS K 7210.

10. (currently amended): A stabilized fluoropolymer obtained via polymerization of an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether represented by the general formula (II):



(wherein  $\text{Y}^2$  represents F, Cl, Br or I, m represents an integer of 1 to 5; when m is an integer of 2 to 5, m atoms of  $\text{Y}^2$  are the same or different; and A represents  $-\text{SO}_2\text{X}-$  or  $-\text{COZ}-$ ; X represents F, Cl, Br, I or  $-\text{NR}^5\text{R}^6$  and Z represents  $-\text{NR}^7\text{R}^8$  or  $-\text{OR}^9$ ;  $\text{R}^5$ ,  $\text{R}^6$ ,  $\text{R}^7$  and  $\text{R}^8$ ;  $\text{R}^5$  and  $\text{R}^6$  are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group and  $\text{R}^9$  represents an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms) and tetrafluoroethylene,

wherein, in a hydrolyzate of said stabilized fluoropolymer, the number [X] of main chain terminal  $-\text{CF}_3$  groups per  $1 \times 10^5$  main chain carbon atoms of said hydrolyzate is not smaller than 10 as calculated using an integrated intensity due to main chain terminal  $-\text{CF}_3$  groups and an integrated intensity due to  $-\text{CF}_2-$  adjacent to an ether bond in side chains branched from the main chain in said hydrolyzate, each determined by solid state  $^{19}\text{F}$  nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometry of said hydrolyzate in a state swollen in an oxygen-containing hydrocarbon compound having a dielectric constant of not lower than 5.0 and further using an ion exchange equivalent weight Ew value determined by titrimetric method,

said stabilized fluoropolymer has a melt index of 0.1 to 20 g/10 minutes as measured under the conditions of 270°C and a load of 2.16 kg according to JIS K 7210.

11. (currently amended): The stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 10, wherein said fluoropolymer further shows an intensity ratio [x/y] between main chain terminal carboxyl group-due peak [x] and  $-\text{CF}_2-$  due peak [y] of not higher than 0.05 in IR measurement.

12. (previously presented): The stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 9, wherein the polymerization of the acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether and tetrafluoroethylene is carried out in the manner of emulsion polymerization.

13. (previously presented): The stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 9, which is obtained by the method according to Claim 7.

14-22. (canceled).